

Ai statement

- I acknowledge the use of AI to identify flowers and animals in my scrap book through the use of google lens

the prompt: I took photos of the flowers/animals to get the names of them

- I can confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own.

- I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used

before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as

evidence

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Refection

Hello my name is Lauren Hobbs. Reflecting on completing the John Muir award, I found the experience to be both interesting and insightful. Although I walk around gnoll park regularly, I had never taken the time to take in the environment around me. I especially enjoyed the fact that I was able to do this award with my children and felt they learnt a lot from this experience. I chose Gnoll park as my setting as it held great meaning to me. I used to go there as a child with my grandparents on school holidays and weekends. I now take my own children there to ride their bikes and play in the play areas ,however, I never ventured far from the main path and never really paid much attention to what was around me. While doing this award I ventured deeper into the surrounding woods and explored the area. Prior to this I didn't realise how big the park truly is or the interesting things that were there.

When walking around we found out about the history of Gnoll park. I found it interesting reading the signs that gave you information on the different areas of the park. I found out that gnoll park used to be a privately owned estate until 1923 when it was bought by the council. We especially found the ruins of gnoll house interesting. We learnt about the families that lived there and the links to coal and salt mining. There were signs around the site stating that bats now live in the ruins, although as we visited during day light hours we did not see them. There used to be formal gardens, follies and water cascades at this site during the 18th century, some of which can still be seen today.

Through doing the john muir award I have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of nature and being outdoors. I have gained knowledge of different types of wild life, flowers, insects and birds.

Through out our journey we seen some beautiful flowers. We sat and smelled them and tried to identify the insects attracted to them. I felt inspired to try and draw some of them as I was in awe of their beauty. Through a little research I found the names of some of these such as foxglove, dog rose and Himalayan balsam.

While we walked around we seen some wildlife in various different areas. We found a lot of small frogs that appeared to be in the areas around the river banks and lakes. I found out some fascinating facts about these after some research. We also seen some squirrels, again I found out some facts about squirrels that I did not know prior to completing this award, such as most of their collecting of food is done in the autumn months and they burry their food under ground. Along our walk we seen a variety of birds, some of which crossed out path and I was able to take a photo of.

There was a variety of insects that we seen, some of which we couldn't get photos of as they were moving to quick. We seen white cabbage butterflies and mountain ringlet butterflies. Theses were mesmerising and I spent a lot of time watching them. We also seen a centipede and a variety of flies and wasps.

We found a number of carved tree sculptures these were a work of art and truly beautiful. I sat and tried to draw one of these as I found them enchanting.

To conserve the area I decided to plant wild flowers in the area. I did this to encourage more pollinating insects such as bees. When walking around I didn't notice any bees, this was a surprise to me as I expected I would see them. I hope that when these seeds grow that it will encourage them to the area. I planted them in an open space so ensure they get plenty of light. I also did a litter pick as I noticed litter within the surrounding woods. I picked up what I could reach as some items were in places that were either out of reach or unsafe such as in rivers. I have emailed gnoll part about placing some bind within the wooded area.

Through doing this award I learnt who John Muir was and what the awards purpose is. I learnt that John Muir was an activist, conservationist and explorer of wild places. I also learnt that he established the first national park in the world.

I shared this experience with my children and we thoroughly enjoyed it. I really feel that we all learnt a lot about the world around us while completing this award. I hadn't realised prior to this the importance of learner led exploring and learning. I plan to do this regularly with my own children as I feel they really gained a lot from this experience. In practice I plan to incorporate more explorative and learner led out door experiences for the children in my setting. I plan to plant different plants within the setting to teach the children about how different plants encourage different insects.

Through out this experience I have gained confidence in exploring the outdoors. I used google lens to identify flowers and animals. I had never done this before and

found it beneficial. I will use this in practice to ensure I am giving the children accurate information about the different flowers around the setting.

Through completing this award I have learnt the importance of conserving our natural environments. I have also learnt that it is vital that we teach children about sustainable citizenship and how they can help conserve for their future and future generations.

In conclusion, completing the John Muir award has been a rewarding and meaningful experience that has strengthened my appreciation for nature and my understanding of the outdoor learning. While exploring gnoll park encouraged me to notice and value the natural environment in ways I had never done so before, while learning about its history, wildlife and through conservation deepened my understanding of the importance of protecting natural spaces. Through sharing the experience with my children, it made me realise the value in child-led exploration and how it can aid meaningful learning through first hand experiences. As an early years practitioner, I will use my newfound knowledge to create opportunities for outdoor, learner led experiences that promote sustainability, curiosity and respect for the environment.

Part 2

This assignment will discuss the role and importance of sustainability within early childhood education, focusing on how outdoor experiences can encourage children to develop respect, awareness, and responsibility towards the environment. It will explore the role of the John Muir Award in promoting conservation, inclusion, and connection with nature, while also considering relevant policies, legislation, and theoretical perspectives that support sustainable practice within the early years.

The Curiosity Approach (2026) states that sustainability in the early years is vital. The meaning of sustainability is meeting the needs of this generation whilst ensuring that future generations are able to have access to the resources and opportunities to ensure their needs are met. Sustainability in the early years involves teaching young children to care for the environment around them, through conservation of resources, reducing waste and ensuring the children see the importance of making responsible choices. Furthermore, Hägglund and Samuelsson (2009) suggests that following the Brundtland report by the OECD in the 1980s, sustainability has become a global concern. They recognise education is vital to ensure sustainability in the future. The curricula in schools have emphasised topics about sustainability, for example climate change and natural conservation. However, it is also stated that there isn't as much attention paid to the role of early childhood education in regard to sustainability. Furthermore, King (2021) states the importance of educating children about sustainability in their early education, this is to ensure they understand the impact they can have on the environment and to help them to connect with the natural world around them. Moreover, they believe that there are many benefits for children that receive education about sustainability within the early years such as feeding their curiosity, critical thinking and for them to truly understand the natural world around them. This can be achieved through various activities such as gardening or nature walks and exploring. Furthermore, they state that to ensure lasting change knowledge of sustainability should be embedded across the whole of early years education.

According to Dhanan (2022) sustainability is often associated with the modern environmental issues it has been a concern since the industrial revolution. However according to records, it is apparent that it was an issue long before this. Moreover, it is suggested that there were concerns dating back as far as 500 BC about degeneration of the environment. Furthermore, Combs (2024) suggests that ancient civilisations acknowledged that they needed to protect their environments. They also agree that concerns for the environment grew in the mid 20th century. Rachel Carson's publication *silent spring* highlighted issues regarding the environment. Moreover, they state that the notion of sustainable development became more established in 1987 following the Brundtland report (cited in Combs, 2024) this highlighted the need to protect the environment for future generations. Since then global initiatives have been put in place to ensure resource protection and climate change, such as the Earth summit 1992 and the united nations sustainable development goals.

Department for Education (2023) emphasises the sustainability strategies within education, this includes schools, early years settings, and further and higher education settings. The main objective is to decrease the environmental impact of this sector and support the UK goal of net zero. Net zero is a plan to decrease greenhouse gasses by 2050. Furthermore, the main objective is to decrease carbon emissions, protect nature, and enhance the development of a green economy.

Welsh Government (2012) states that the education for sustainable development and global citizenship aims to give people knowledge and skills to address global challenges such as biodiversity loss and climate change. It enables people to gain knowledge of the connections between the environment, economy and society, while also recognising the impact they have on the world around them. The ESDGC encourages critical thinking, active citizenship and responsible decision making for people to understand their role in creating sustainability. It also places importance on sustainability for both current and future generations. The ESDGC encourages hands on experiences as well as gaining knowledge.

Welsh Government (2015) states that the wellbeing of future generations Wales act purpose is to improve the social, economical, environmental and cultural well being of Wales. This if for future generations and current. It consist of a framework for

government agencies, this requires them to work together and consider the long term impacts and prevent problems while involving communities in decision making. This act consists of seven goals. These are a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and a globally responsible Wales. These are designed to ensure organisations are able to create a more sustainable and healthier Wales.

Pickering (2018) states that a big part of the John Muir award is having hands on experience. This is done through discovery, exploration, conservation and sharing their experiences. John Muir trust. (n.d.) states that the John Muir award supports the curriculum for Wales four purposes for learning in many ways. Through active hands-on learning children are gaining critical thinking skills, this links to the ambitious capable learner aspect of the national curriculum. It also enhances their language and expressive arts. The healthy and confident individual area of the curriculum is also supported through gaining knowledge about their ecological footprints and how their lifestyle choices impact this. Through hands on activity they are also gaining knowledge on ways to overcome challenges and risk taking. Through being in the outdoors and having hands-on experiences children's mental health and wellbeing are supported. Another of the purposes is ethical informed citizens, this is supported through the conservation aspect of the award. Through the conservation process children are gaining knowledge of the impact of their actions for example through litter picking or planting as seen within the scrap book for part one of this assignment. This gives children a sense of responsibility as they are encouraged to leave the setting the same way they found it. The John Muir award also supports the enterprising creative contributors purpose within the curriculum for Wales through gaining unique outdoor opportunities through sharing ideas and emotions while doing the share section of the award. Through sharing ideas and working as a team children are able to develop their communication skills set (John Muir trust, n.d.).

The United Nations conventions on the rights of the child articles 29 and 31 state that children have the right to play, rest, education and to be involved in cultural and environmental activities (UNICEF, n.d.). According to London Wildlife Trust (2019) the John Muir award provides opportunities for children to learn about the natural

environment and gives them opportunities to explore them. While doing the John Muir award people are encouraged to learn about the environment and nature through gaining hands-on experiences.

According to Froebel Trust (2022) Froebel believed that children have holistic experiences of the outdoor world including nature as well as plants and animals. He believed that children learn best through hands-on experiences within nature. He theorised that through such experiences children realise the connections between living things and supports them to think about the environment, sustainability and climate change. Ryan (2025) suggests that Froebel's theory is still influential in early childhood education today. They also suggest that Froebel's ideas have shaped other theories such as Montessori and Reggio Emilia. Froebel's approach placed importance on child led learning to develop children's curiosity, creativity, problem solving skill and continuous learning. Department for Education (2023) states that planting falls in line with Froebel's beliefs, there is evidence of this being done within the scrapbook in part one.

According to the Herald Staff (2026) the John Muir award has many benefits. They state that through a combination of outdoor learning, conservation and sharing the experience supports people to develop lifelong relationships with nature and the natural world. They also suggest that this award encourages people to take the time to appreciate and explore the natural environments around them. Through doing this there is an opportunity to develop an understanding of the relationships between the natural world and people, alongside gaining both outdoor skills and confidence. They suggest that it is highly beneficial and encourages people to feel responsible for the natural environments. John Muir trust (n.d.b) agrees that there are many benefits. However, they also recognise that many individuals face barriers that can prevent them from accessing wild places and participating in outdoor learning. These barriers include structural challenges such as disability, long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, financial hardship, language differences, and systemic inequalities that can limit equal access to natural environments. The award also acknowledges that some people experience social disadvantage, poor mental health, educational disengagement, or limited opportunities to develop transferable skills and confidence. However, they also state that through its flexible and inclusive approach,

the John Muir Award aims to reduce these barriers by adapting activities to meet peoples individual needs and ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to connect with nature. By promoting accessibility, participation, and environmental stewardship, the award enables individuals to improve their wellbeing, develop new skills, and gain a greater appreciation of the natural world.

In conclusion, this assignment has explored the importance of sustainability within early childhood education and how outdoor learning experiences can support children's understanding of the natural world. The John Muir Award provides valuable opportunities for children to engage in discovering new places, exploration, conservation, and sharing their experiences. it also provides hands-on learning opportunities while developing confidence, wellbeing, and environmental responsibility. Through inclusive and meaningful experiences, early years practitioners can support children to become responsible citizens who value and protect the environment for future generations.

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